

VZCZCXRO5169
RR RUEHGH
DE RUEHUL #0444 0790747
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 200747Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3676
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC 8291
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5552
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9362
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5447
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0442
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4068
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 3063
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6298
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0682
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2066
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1097
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1718

UNCLAS SEOUL 000444

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [KS](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: SEOUL - MEDIA REACTION

North Korea - detained U.S. journalists

"North Korea Must Free U.S. Reporters Now"

Conservative Chosun Ilbo editorialized (03/20): "If this incident is resolved through U.S. - North Korea negotiations, like in the past, those negotiations would mark the first (negotiations between U.S. and North Korea) since the launch of the Obama Administration. In this regard, this incident might serve to change the North's hard-line stance, which has been growing more radical in recent months. ... North Korea should immediately release the two U.S. journalists. If it detains them for a long period of time while accusing them of 'spying,' as it did in the past, it would turn U.S. public opinion against the North."

"Detained U.S. Journalists Are Not Subjects for Political Deal"

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo editorialized (03/20): "North Korea might attempt to use the detention as a political bargaining tool. However, the North should not turn a humanitarian issue into a political matter. ... It should accurately clarify why the reporters were detained. Whatever the reason, since their identities have been confirmed, the North should release the journalists as soon as possible without any conditions attached. Otherwise, it is as if North Korea is proclaiming to the world that it is a dictatorship with many things to hide."

"Detention of U.S. Journalists: Crisis or Opportunity?"

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized (03/20): "What is important now is the willingness of the two countries (the U.S. and North Korea) to talk. Even though the U.S. is still reviewing its North Korea policy, talks should continue between the U.S. and North Korea. This detention incident can be a good opportunity (for dialogue.) In 1996, when a Korean American illegally entered North Korea, Washington sent Bill Richardson, then-U.S. Congressman, to Pyongyang as a special envoy to resolve the case, and that paved the way for the two countries to improve bilateral ties. This incident could also turn the situation around if they have the will (to talk.)"

STEPHENS